

# Grassroots Advocacy Breakout Outline Fall Pol 2016

## Who I am?

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## What are we going to do?

- Present for 15 or 20
- Go into Q and A
- Share your name, one issue you care about most, and where you are from.

## Why we need grassroots advocacy?

- I love Oklahoma. We face A LOT of challenges.
- We want to fix those problems,
- We sometimes haven't done enough of what actually works to make positive changes happen.
- We have what many would call a Broken democracy
  - 20% in local, 30% in last governor election
  - <http://okpolicy.org/brokendemocracy/>
- Legislators telling us they want to but don't hear from their constituents often nor about the right things. (get my cousin out of jail)

- When they do hear from us things change (ex: stopped school vouchers, changed 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading retention)
- We are citizens and we don't just have rights, we also have responsibilities.
  - The right to effective, intelligent, just representation by elected officials./The responsibility to be an active, engaged, informed citizen

### **What is grassroots advocacy?**

- Unlike direct advocacy/lobbying grassroots advocacy means motivating and organizing individuals and groups to work for a common goal.
- *Grass roots* lobbying- attempts to influence legislation by affecting the opinion of the public. Encouraging the audience to take action with respect to the legislation. –so says IRS

### **What does it look like?**

- We work together to learn to do direct advocacy
- Host events to boost public understanding and awareness
- Collaborate to create media (social media) and more to get the message to the people . Not just social media, who votes, who reads the papers?

## How do we do grassroots advocacy?

- Together Oklahoma (<http://togetherok.org/>) started as push back against the idea that we can slash taxes without replacing that revenue.
- Flier in your packet says “budget is a moral document” because we spend money on the things that we value.
- Who makes the budget? legislators.
  - How many know who they are? (in more than name?)
  - Who you are going to vote for?
  - Have talked to a legislator or your candidates?
- Find the issues (ex: mental health care program funds)
- Find the people who care about the issues and are willing to act
- Find our targets
  - Who might be a good target for budget and tax advocacy?
    - House- Joint A & B committee & subcommittees
    - Senate Finance committee and maybe Appropriations and appropriations sub-committees
    - Your own legislators

- Do the research on targets and on issues
  - Power mapping
  - OK Policy data on issues (okpolicy.org)
- Communicate with each other and public about all these things (emails, events, social media, and more)
- Develop our messaging, video, and our campaigns  
Ex: puppet videos, Ex: committees, Ex: Agenda for broad based prosperity.
- We know why we need it, what it is, what it looks like/how we do it. Let's talk about the barriers

### **Barriers to grassroots advocacy**

- What are some of the barriers that make it tough for people who care, who are committed to an issue they are passionate about, to take action?
- Recognizing the need: helping those who have the time to act with those who live the impacts of the policies
- Fear of conflict- (Some say D.C. is Hollywood for ugly people, but in reality legislators are regular real people)
- Figure out if we can win? What is our likelihood of success? How do we support each other in tough times. Examples of unlikely wins: Together OK and the Double Deduction. Senator Twitter battle over flex loans,
- "If you don't ask the answer is always "no""

- Lack of resources. (work Together, get strategic and get creative. Ex: Supporting Women Lead in their State Questions Forums instead of hosting our own)

There are barriers but we can overcome them if we work together. Our TOK blog post on barriers and bridges to grassroots advocacy goes into some of those things.

## **Best Practices**

- Ultimately you are trying to figure out what will actually change their minds? Find the thing you like about each of these complicated people. Who is a much maligned OK state legislator? Ex: Sally Kern- Homelessness, Constitutional Convention. Ex: bi-partisan Criminal Justice reform efforts.
- Power mapping. Who can get to the targets?
- What are the best tactics? You can stand in someone's front yard at midnight waving a sign, shouting slogans, and chaining yourself to the bumper of their car or you can get their attention and ask them to change and hold them accountable. (7 ways to get your legislators attention)

- Power map yourself? What are your circles of influence – you have the most influence with your family and close friends, then acquaintances, next most influence on your local community, then your city, your state, and somewhere way out there the Presidential election. Best to spend time on the places where you have the most influence.
- Step people in gently- The ladder of engagement steps us from quick and easy actions to actions that require more investment of time and energy but are more powerful because of that.
  - Sign petition (get their info and get them started)
  - Showing up to an event
  - Contacting their legislator
  - Do research on a bill, district, legislator, or other target
- Work with a team
- Advocates need to have the right balance of Hutzpah (nerve) and humility - Parker Palmer (Quaker wise man, writer, religious leader)
  - No hutzpa- you never even end up at the table, if you don't ask the answer is always no
  - No humility- burn out, don't listen, worst yet destroy your own work by missing a barrier or an opportunity.

Q and A 20 mins

The struggle is real. We don't always believe we can make things change, we often don't have the right tools to be effective, and there are definitely some folks in power who won't listen. However, we can win more by:

- Getting informed, connected, and active, and celebrating our successes.
- We can utilize best practices and work with smart teammates who can help us stay on track.
- Let's not put a whole lot of energy into ineffective strategies that drain our resources and get us nowhere.
- We can know that some leaders can't be reached with a direct approach so we come to them strategically. Others can't be reached at all so we do careful cost benefit analysis, work with those who work, and always keep an eye to recruiting and developing the best leaders in each of our communities.
- Almost every issue we care about is directly or indirectly tied to the budget.
- "No permanent friends, no permanent enemies." Keeping this in mind today can help us be agile tomorrow.

We can find that balance of hutzpah and humility and we can find ways to boost our self-care for this challenging work.

- Flight attendant air mask
- Tea cup and saucer
- Get out there, do your best, take time to reflect and don't be resist asking for help.
- H.A.L.T- Never get too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired
- Take the long view and see the gains we have made.
- You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.
- Do what works for you.
- Know we are in this together.